

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 8521

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, EC
SUBJECT: LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES FORGE COALITION

1. SUMMARY: THE RADICAL LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE PARTIES
(TOGETHER WITH NINE OTHER LESSER PARTIES) AGREED TO PARTICIPATE
IN AN ELECTORAL COALITION FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY.
WHILE THERE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE DIFFICULTIES IN SELECTING A
COMMON PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE FOR THE JULY 16 ELECTIONS, THE
COALITION IS PERCEIVED AS HAVING THE BEST CHANCE OF DEFEATING
POLULIST AND FRONT-RUNNER ASSAD BUCARAM AT THE POLLS. THE
GOE IS REPORTEDLY SURREPTIOUSLY BACKING THE COALITION AND AS
SUCH THE POSSIBILITY OF THE RETORNO PROCESS BEING DISRUPTED
IN ORDER TO BLOCK A BUCARAM PRESIDENCY HAS PROBABLY BEEN
CONSIDERABLY DIMINISHED. END SUMMARY.

2. ELEVEN POLITICAL GROUPS, HEADED BY THE RADICAL LIBERAL
AND CONSERVATIVE PARTIES, ANNOUNCED ON DECEMBER 21 THE FORMATION
OF THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONALIST FRONT. IT MARKS THE
FIRST TIME IN HISTORY THAT ECUADOR'S TWO TRADITIONAL
PARTIES HAVE ENTERED INTO A COALITION WITH EACH OTHER.
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3. THE POLITICAL MANIFESTO ACCOMPANYING THE ANNOUNCEMENT
OUTLINED THE BASIS OF THE AGREEMENT AS:
--SUPPORT FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE JANUARY 15 CONSTI-
TUTIONAL REFERENDUM,
-- ASPIRATION TOWARDS THE PRESENTATION OF A COMMON CANDIDATE
IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION SCHEDULED FOR JULY 16, 1978,

-- ADVOCACY OF THE CONVOCAION OF CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS AT THE SAME TIME AS PRESIDENTIAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS. THE MANIFESTO ALSO STATES THAT WHILE THE GROUPS ARE NOT NECESSARILY PLEASED WITH THE METHOD CHOSEN OF RETURNING TO CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT, ANY ROAD TO DEMOCRACY MUST BE ACCEPTED. THEY EXPRESS THEMSELVES AS DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE CIVIC APATHY WHICH HAS ARISEN SINCE THE LAST NATIONAL ELECTIONS IN 1968, AND THEREFORE BELIEVE THAT THEIR NARROWER INTERESTS HAVE TO BE PUT ASIDE AT THIS TIME IN FAVOR OF TRANSCENDENTAL INTERESTS OF THE COUNTRY.

4. ASIDE FROM THE LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE PARTIES, THE SIGNATORIES INCLUDE THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS BRANCH OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY, THE LIBERALS PRINCIPAL ALLY IN THE PREVIOUSLY ESTABLISHED CENTER LEFT COALITION, PLUS TWO OTHER MINIPARTIES FROM THE SAME COALITION, THE POPULAR ACTION FRONT, REPUBLICAN LEFT, AND THE ECUADOREAN REVOLUTIONARY ALLIANCE. ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM WERE JAIME ACOSTA VELASCO'S DEMOCRATIC ACTION, THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS, ARNE, AND EX-PRESIDENT OTTO AROSEMENA'S CID. ALSO INCLUDED WAS THE NATIONAL GUEVARIST PARTY, AN OFFSHOOT OF ASSAD BUCARAM'S CONCENTRATION OF POPULAR FORCES. BASED ON PAST PERFORMANCE, THE COALITION COULD REPRESENT AN AGGREGATE OF 40-45 PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE, ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT (IN THEORY AT LEAST) TO THE ESTIMATED STRENGTH OF BUCARAM.

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5. CONSERVATIVE PARTY NATIONAL DIRECTOR RODRIGO SUAREZ TOLD EMBASSY PRIOR TO THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE COALITION REPRESENTED THE MOST SERIOUS AND SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE TO BUCARAM AT THE POLLS. HE ALSO INDICATED THAT ITS CHANCES WOULD BE FURTHER ENHANCED BY EXPECTED GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL BACKING. THE BIGGEST PROBLEM, HE THOUGHT, WAS THE SELECTION OF A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE AND THE COALITION HAD YET TO DEVISE A NOMINATION MECHANISM. HE BELIEVED THAT THE COALITION COULD FALL APART ON THIS ISSUE, BUT HE WAS OPTIMISTIC. SUAREZ COMMENTED THAT THE USG HAD ACTED AS SOMETHING OF A MIDWIFE TO THE COALITION SINCE HIS RECENT IV GRANT TO THE US IN COMPANY OF LIBERAL LEADER FRANCISCO HUERTA MONTALVO HAD ALLOWED THE TWO TO REACH A GENERAL UNDERSTANDING.

6. COMMENT: WE AGREE WITH SUAREZ' ASSESSMENT OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COALITION, SINCE IT REPRESENTS BY FAR THE BEST INSTRUMENT WITH WHICH TO BATTLE BUCARAM AT THE POLLS. BY GIVING THE FIERCELY ANTI-BUCARAM ELEMENTS IN THE MILITARY AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR A REALISTIC POLITICAL ALTERNATIVE, IT OUGHT TO REDUCE CONSIDERABLY

SUPPORT FOR ANOTHER MILITARY INTERVENTION IN ORDER TO
BLOCK BUCARAM. SINCE, AS SUAREZ SUGGESTED, THERE IS
GOVERNMENT COLLUSION IN THIS EFFORT, THE MILITARY IS
LIKELY TO GIVE THE COALITION EVERY CHANCE OF SUCCEEDING
BEFORE CONSIDERING INTERVENTION.

7. AS SUAREZ NOTED, THE BIGGEST PROBLEM IN MAINTAINING
THE COALITION IS A DECISION ABOUT A COMMON PRESIDENTIAL
CANDIDATE. BECAUSE OF THE CHALLENGE PRESENTED BY IZQUIERDA
DEMOCRATICA CANDIDATE RODRIGO BORJA FOR THE HISTORICAL
LIBERAL VOTE, IT IS DIFFICULT TO CONCEIVE OF THE RADICAL
LIBERALS VERY EASILY RENOUNCING THEIR OWN CANDIDATE IN
FAVOR OF SOMEONE FROM THE CONSERVATIVE SIDE. THEY WILL
THUS PUSH VERY HARD FOR THREE TIME PRESIDENTIAL LOSER
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RAUL CLEMENTE HUERTA, WHILE THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE COALITION
WILL COUNTER WITH QUITO MAYOR SIXTO DURAN AND ACOSTA
VELASCO. EVEN IF THE COALITION RESOLVES THIS ISSUE,
IT WILL BE FACED WITH THE CONSIDERABLE PROBLEM OF CON-
VERTING THE SUM OF ITS INDIVIDUAL PARTS INTO AN EQUIVALENT
AMOUNT OF VOTES AT THE POLLS -- NOT AN EASY TASK CONSIDERING
THE NEARLY 100 YEARS OF INTENSE RIVALRY BETWEEN LIBERALS
AND CONSERVATIVES.
BLOOMFIELD

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